

9–16 March 2017

# Power Play: The Elon Musk Tweet that Flicked the Switch

Media Analysis Report

**Energy policy is not a topic that usually excites the Twitterverse – let alone the universe – but Elon Musk’s intervention into power issues in South Australia prompted a social and traditional media storm.**

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**This report presents the findings of an analysis of coverage of Elon Musk, Tesla and Mike Cannon-Brookes in relation to energy storage in South Australia, between 9-16 March 2017. It is an example of a Media Analysis Report, available through Isentia’s Research & Insights team,**

# HOW IT ALL STARTED

A radio interview on the 9 March with Lyndon Rive, Tesla's head of energy products, suggested to Radio National's Fran Kelly that Tesla could potentially solve South Australia's power problems by installing between 100–300MWh of grid-connected battery storage in under 100 days.

Rive was interviewed about these claims throughout the day, but it was not until a Twitter exchange between Australian tech mogul Mike Cannon-Brookes and Tesla founder Elon Musk on 10 March that the proposal really attracted attention.



**Social media discussion peaked at:**

# 1,000

tweets. In the hour after Musk replied to a series of tweets from Cannon-Brookes.

**Between 9 - 16 March**

# >27,000

total posts and reports discussed the proposal across social and traditional media

# CAN SOCIAL MEDIA LEAD CONVERSATION?

## This was a rare example of a conversation on social media that was the focus of, and then effectively led, traditional media

With the possible exception of tweets that emanate from the desk of the US President, it's still rare for social media to lead traditional. But the overwhelming majority of discussion of Musk's proposal appeared on social media (79.7%).

Social media discussion dominated the first few days in particular, with Twitter consistently presenting the latest news on the story. Most new developments in the story originated there and were subsequently picked up by broadcast or internet an hour or two later, while press was sometimes days behind.

Print media, with its associated production delays, was naturally less well-equipped to deal with the speed with which the discussion unfolded in social media. Press reporting peaked on Wednesday 15 March, when all other media types were declining in volume.

## A novel, authentic exchange led to greater engagement

While Musk and Cannon-Brookes have a significant Twitter following between them (Musk has more than 13 million followers, Cannon-Brookes has over 24,000), the extent to which their tweets about the proposal were shared was enhanced by the nature of the exchange.

The tweets were candid, novel and amusing. Cannon-Brookes's and Musk's references to a bet, and their use of casual terms like "mates rates", "legend" and "mate", as well as the odd emoji, are all features that would most likely be edited out of a news report. But in this case, these features contributed to a sense of authenticity, and resonated strongly on Twitter.



Bold statements drove the coverage, and social media engagement declined as the discussion became more detailed and mundane.

The exchange also offered an insight into a world the general public do not usually get to see. These sorts of conversations between high-profile, elite figures are inherently newsworthy, but are not rare; what's unique about this situation is that our access to such events is usually mediated by traditional media, or often only known when the project is complete.

In this case, the public got direct access to the exchange, circumventing the media cycle. Moreover, politicians, who usually play key roles in such discussions, effectively had to keep up with events as they played out on social media. The extensive interest on social media also in turn attracted the attention of traditional media sources – the exchange itself was the story, at least initially.

# CAN SOCIAL MEDIA LEAD CONVERSATION?

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“Communications should be platform agnostic. What it’s really about is analysing the conversation – looking at peaks and movement across all outlets, not just traditional”

**Asha Oberoi**  
Insights Manager - Isentia

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## Traditional media amplified and legitimised the story

Twitter posts and internet reporting had a distinct pattern of interaction: tweets linked to online articles, and online articles linked to tweets. Over half of the analysed social media posts linked to a mainstream media outlet.

Twitter was mentioned in approximately half the press and internet articles, but interestingly only about one in seven broadcast reports. This can partly be attributed to the brevity of most radio and television reports, and the inability to demonstrate the context for the story with images on radio.

The story had a relatively extended lifespan – it ran in some form for at least a full week. Traditional media coverage, and particularly press coverage, increased as more politicians and stakeholders became involved in the story, most notably Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, and the issue gained a much larger profile. After Turnbull entered the discussion on 12 March, traditional news media coverage hit its highest peak.

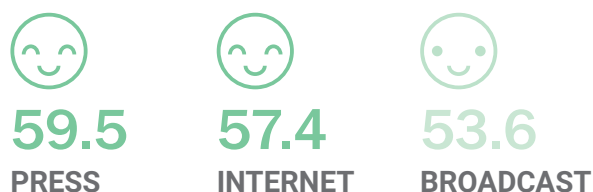
The involvement of politicians such as Turnbull and SA Premier Jay Weatherill also often took place or was announced on Twitter, further extending the interplay between social and traditional media.



# HOW THE STORY WAS RECEIVED?

Press and internet media were very positive (high average favourability ratings of 59.5 and 57.4 respectively). While still positive overall, social media was less favourable on average (with a rating of 53.6). This difference was largely a result of the different media format types: press and internet allow for much more detailed discussion than social. Broadcast coverage was overwhelmingly neutral, largely as these reports were brief, factual summaries of events.

## Sentiment by Media\*



This narrative continued to appear in social media even as it dropped off in traditional coverage

Positive messages and narratives appeared consistently throughout the period. The top three leading messages to appear in coverage were all favourable: batteries can solve power problems, renewable energy supported and Elon Musk praised. The leading narrative was the similarly positive “innovation/new generation can solve problems”. Interestingly, this narrative continued to appear in social media even as it dropped off in traditional coverage, reflecting the way the discussion was generally positively framed on social media.

Unfavourable coverage peaked on 14 March. In particular, press discussion of the political context of energy supply was reflected in the increased volume of coverage on this day that conveyed narratives such as “finger pointing”, “Turnbull is weak/a failure”, and “gas and coal are best”.

## Who's driving the story?

Brian Robins authored four negative articles about the story. These quoted stakeholders detailing what battery systems could offer, to suggest that the proposal had been overhyped. This coverage conveyed messages such as batteries cannot solve power problems, and Tesla solution is not a new idea.

In contrast, Fairfax's Richard McLeish was very positive towards the story – he contributed a total of 13 online and press articles, all of which were favourable (69.2 average favourability rating). McLeish mostly detailed the developments in the Twitter interaction between Musk and Cannon-Brookes.

Apart from Twitter, the leading media outlet was ABC News 24, with 45 reports. All of these were neutral in tone, as broadcast reports tended to be brief and simply noted the novelty of the conversation between Musk and Cannon-Brookes.

\*refer to methodologies for more details on page 17

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Key Metrics Highlights

The Key Metrics table to the right shows key aspects of the analysed coverage.

These can be adapted to reflect your KPIs or areas of particular interest to you.

Our approach results in clearly defined benchmarks, improved media connections, increased budgets and changes in public policy.

Our reports allow you to:

- Demonstrate your effectiveness.
- Establish benchmarks and measure KPIs.
- Manage breaking issues.
- Understand your media landscape.



## Total Volume of Coverage

OVERALL

1,120

INTERNET/NEWS

140

PRESS

320

SOCIAL MEDIA

435

BROADCAST

305



## Favourability of Coverage

OVERALL

56.2

INTERNET/NEWS

59.5

PRESS

57.4

SOCIAL MEDIA

50.0

BROADCAST

53.6

## Key Metrics

LEADING MESSAGE (MENTIONS):

BATTERIES CAN SOLVE POWER PROBLEMS (300)

LEADING SPOKESPERSON (MENTIONS):

ELON MUSK, TESLA CEO (118)

LEADING MEDIA (REPORTS):

TWITTER (302)

LEADING MEDIA BYLINE/COMPERE:

RICHARD MCLEISH, FAIRFAX; FRAN KELLY, RADIO NATIONAL (13 EACH)

## Favourability Breakdown

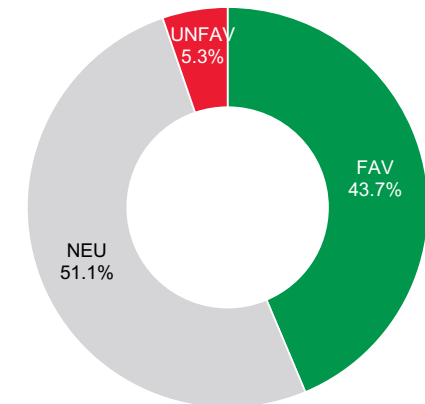
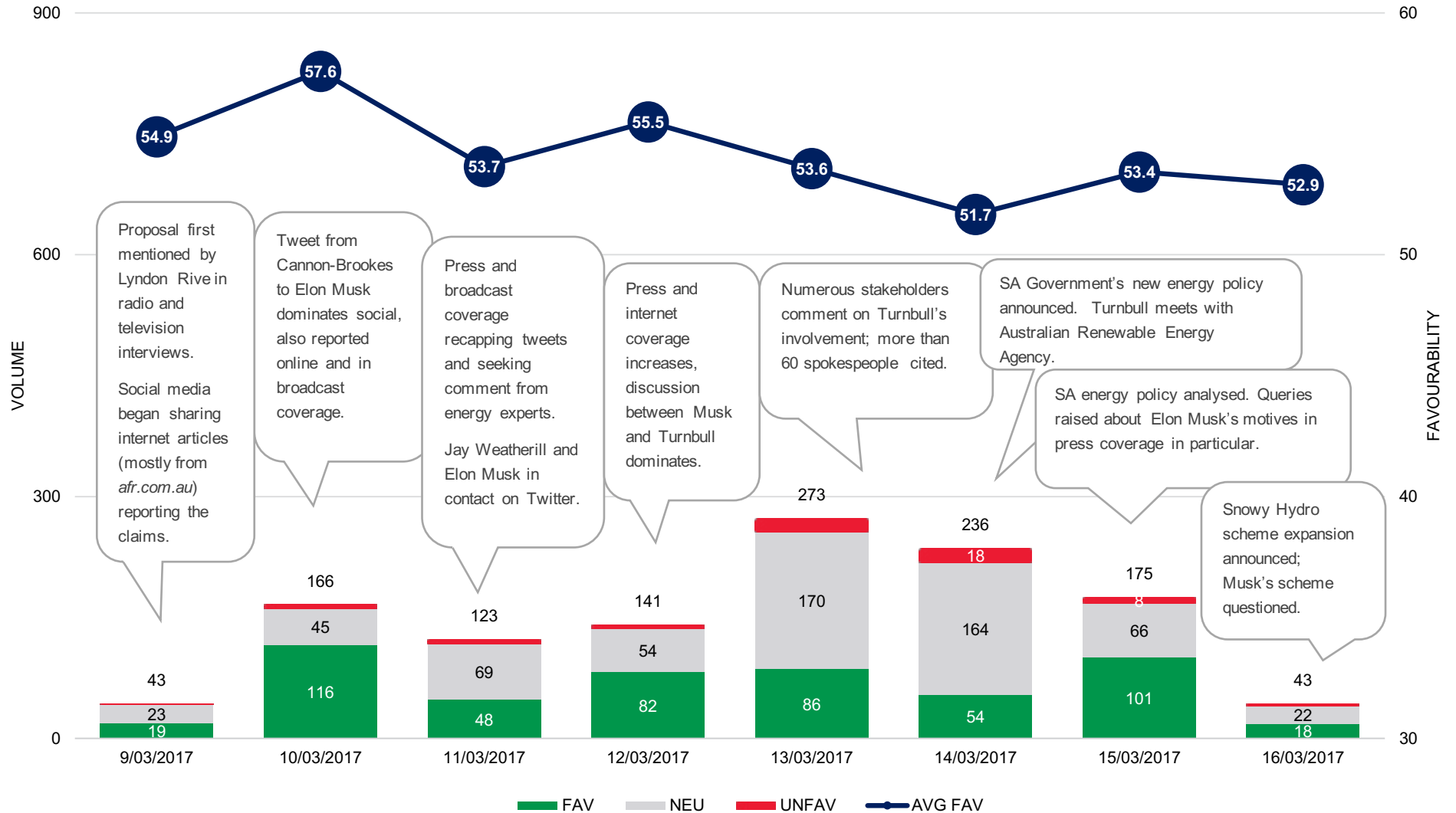


Chart 1 above shows the volumes and proportions of favourable, neutral and unfavourable discussion.

# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Chart 2



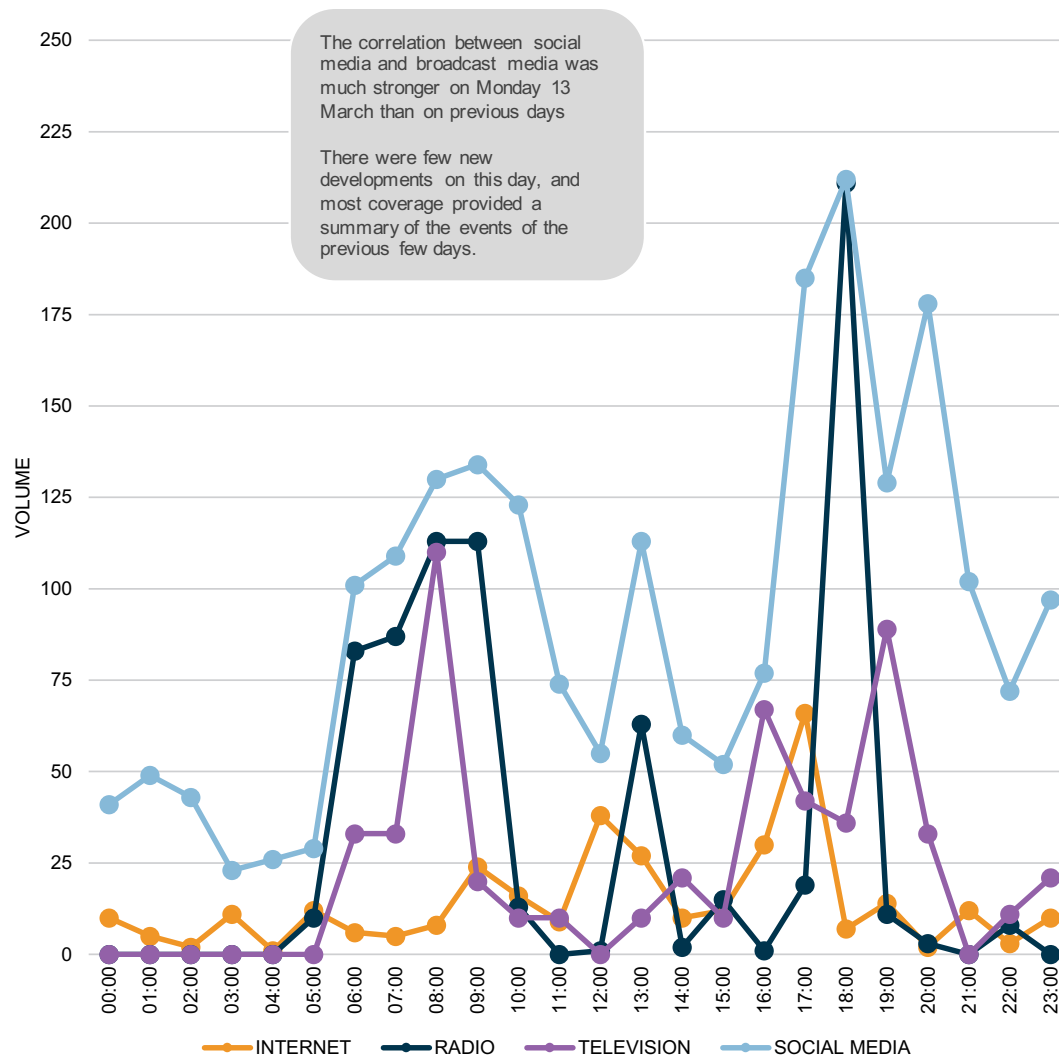


# HOURLY TREND

## Broadcast and Social Media by Hour

This chart breaks down the broadcast and social media coverage by hour, for Monday 13 March.

### Chart 3 Monday 13th March

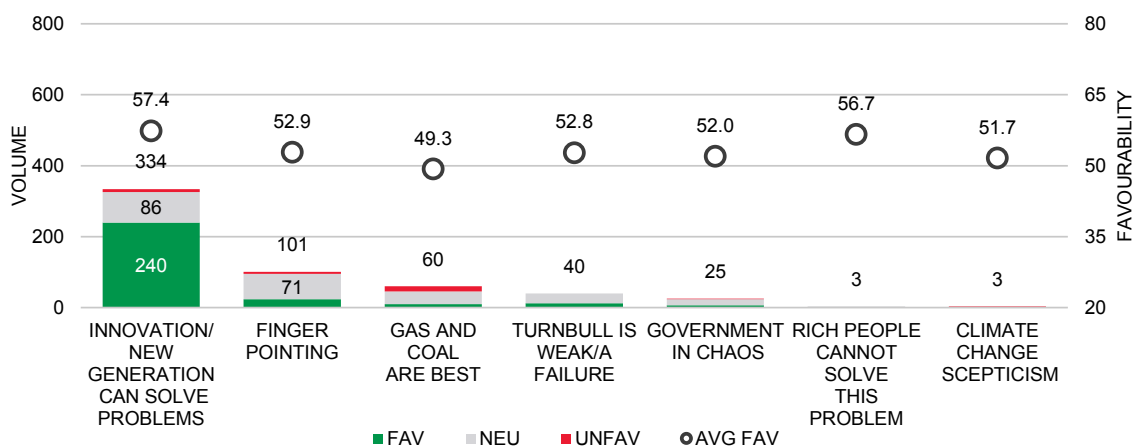


# LEADING NARRATIVE

## Broadcast and Social Media by Hour

This chart breaks down the broadcast and social media coverage by hour, for Monday 13 March.

Chart 4 All Media

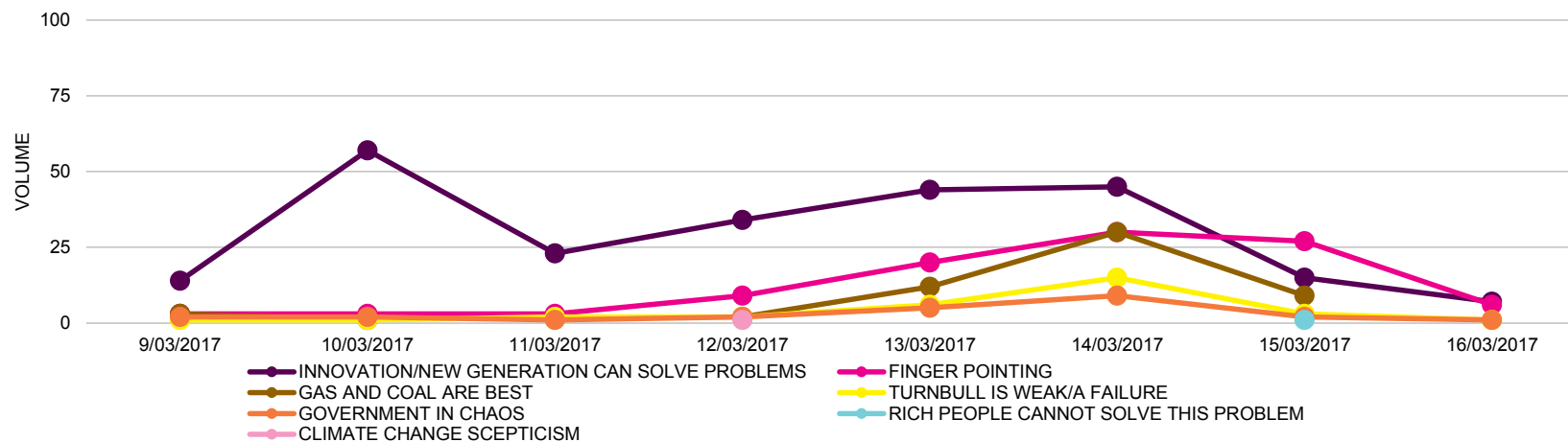


Charts 5 and 6 on the next page break these narratives down by day and by media type, showing that discussion was consistently very positive towards Musk and the proposal.

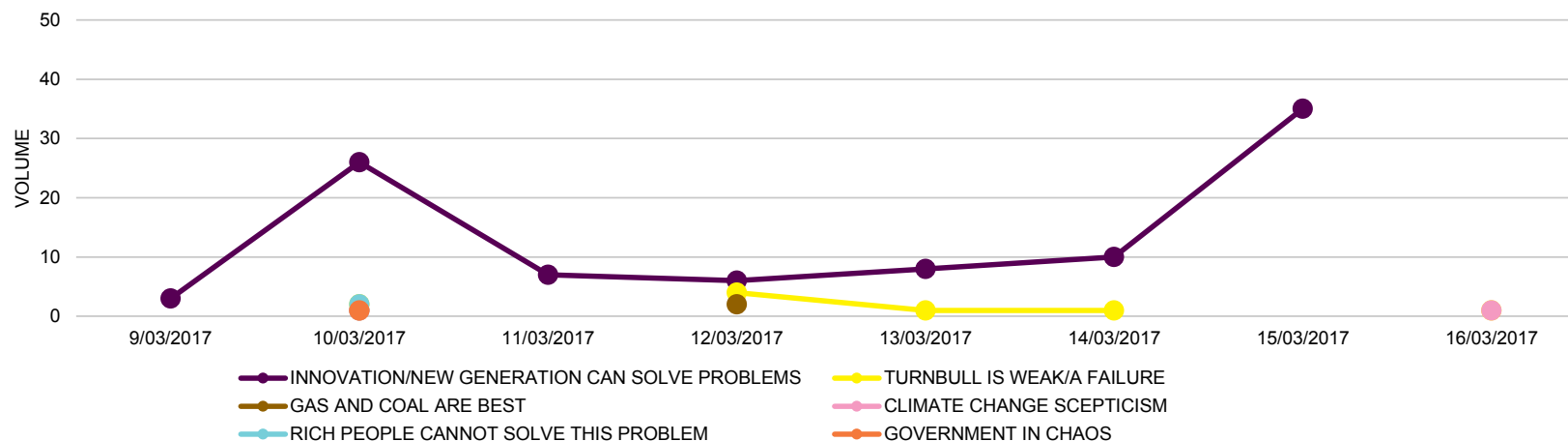
This was particularly so on social media, where the narrative that innovation/new generation can solve problems was consistently reinforced even as it dropped off in traditional media. To some degree, this is likely to have been because social media users are inherently likely to be more positive towards technology, but it also highlights that more detailed, more critical and more politicised discussion took place in press and internet coverage.

# LEADING NARRATIVES – DAILY TREND

## Chart 5 Traditional Media



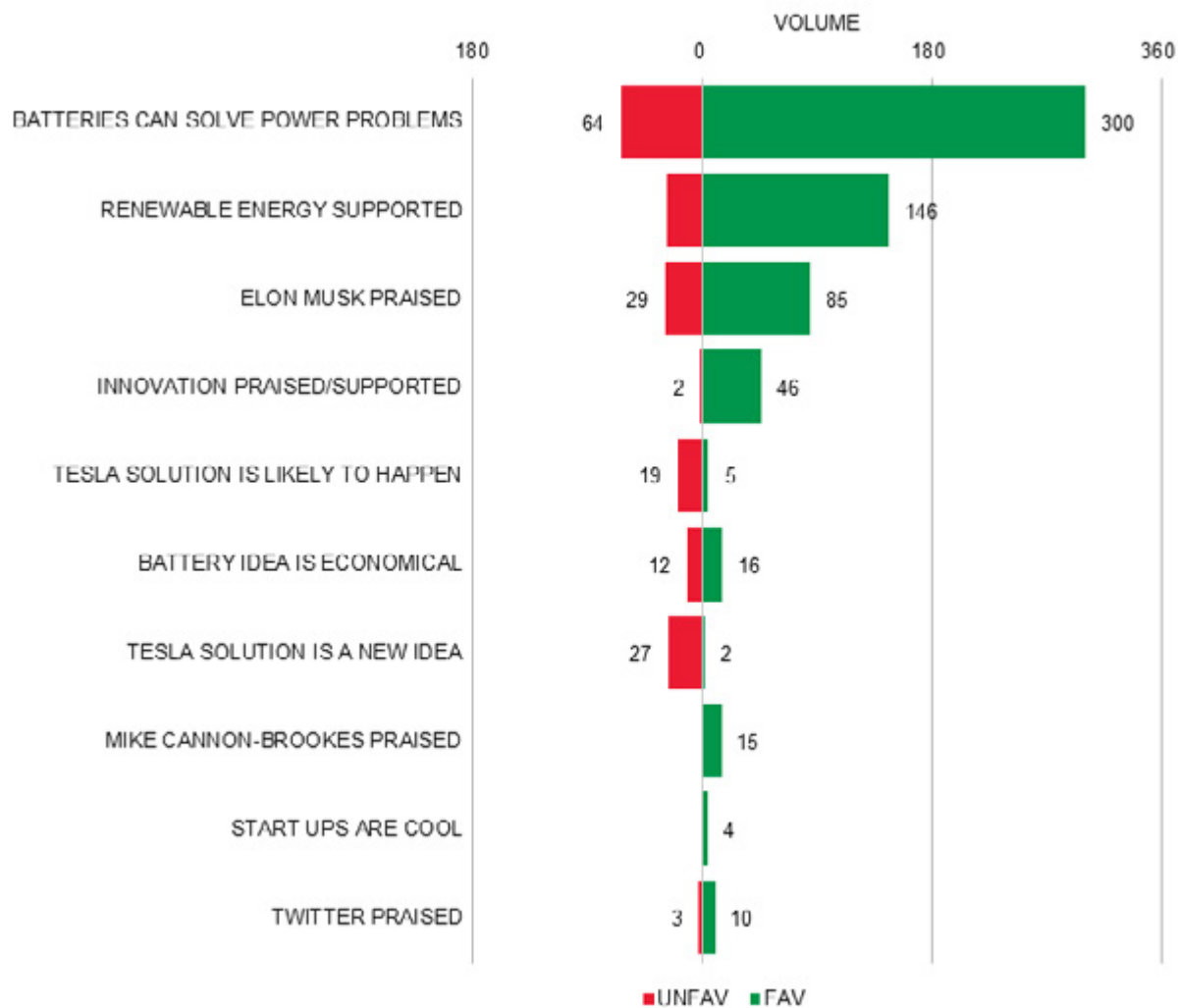
## Chart 6 Social Media



# LEADING MESSAGES

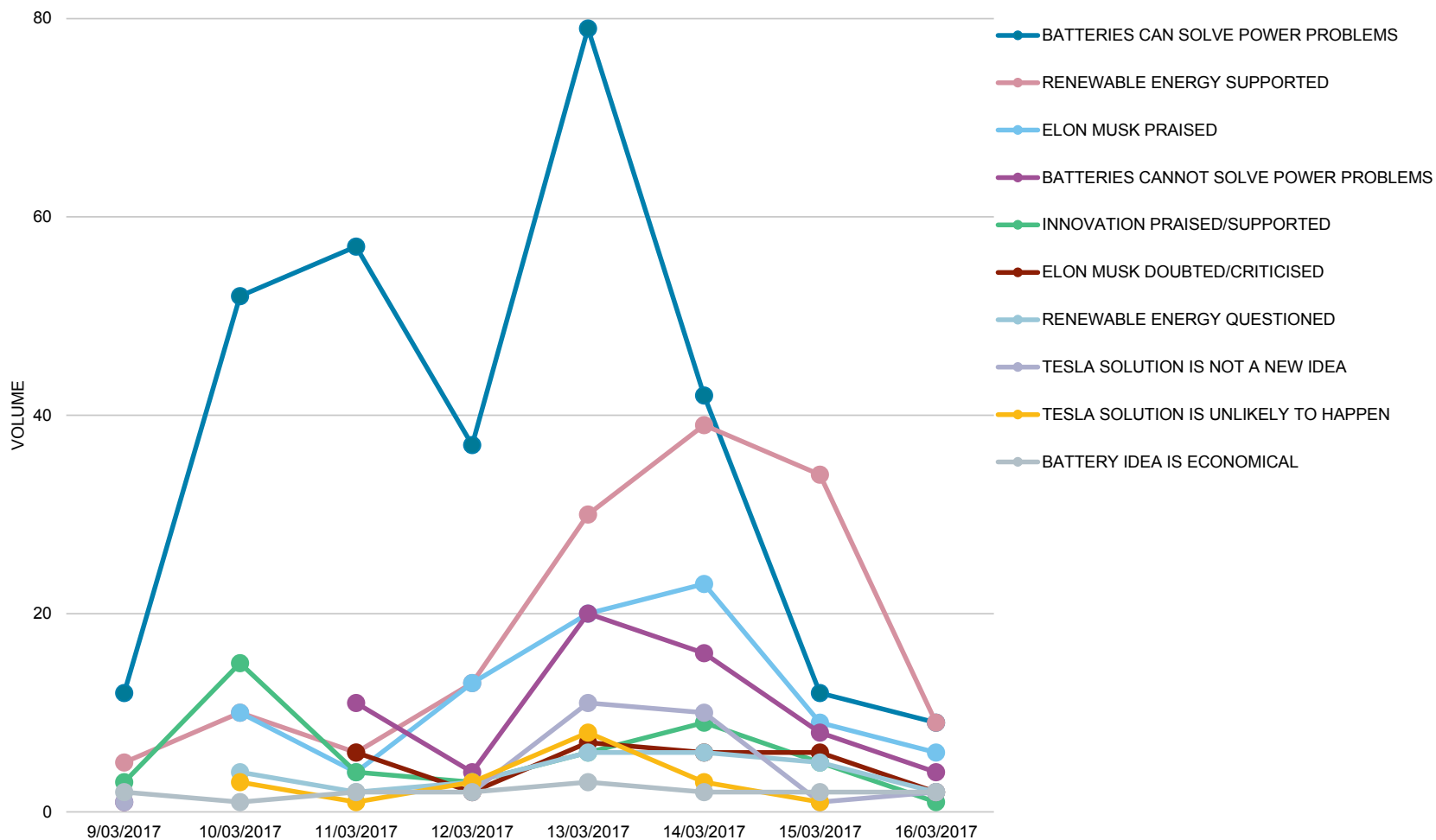
This chart shows the volume of mentions of favourable (green) and unfavourable (red) messages in the analysed coverage. Reports can convey more than one message.

### Chart 7 – All Media



# MESSAGES BY DAY

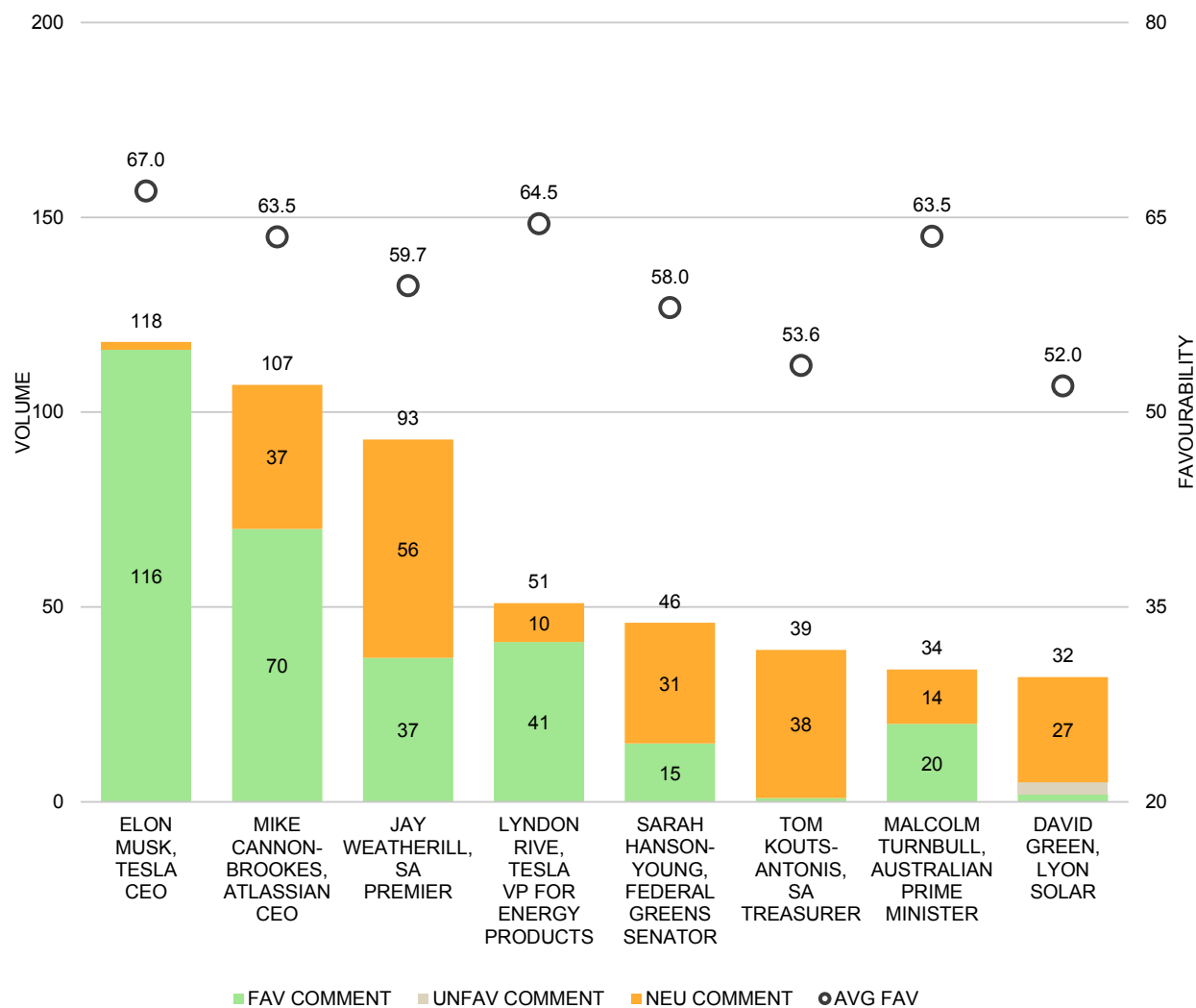
Chart 8 – All Media



# LEADING SPOKESPEOPLE

This chart shows the most frequently quoted or cited spokespeople in the analysed coverage, the bias of their comments, and the average favourability rating of the reports in which they were cited.

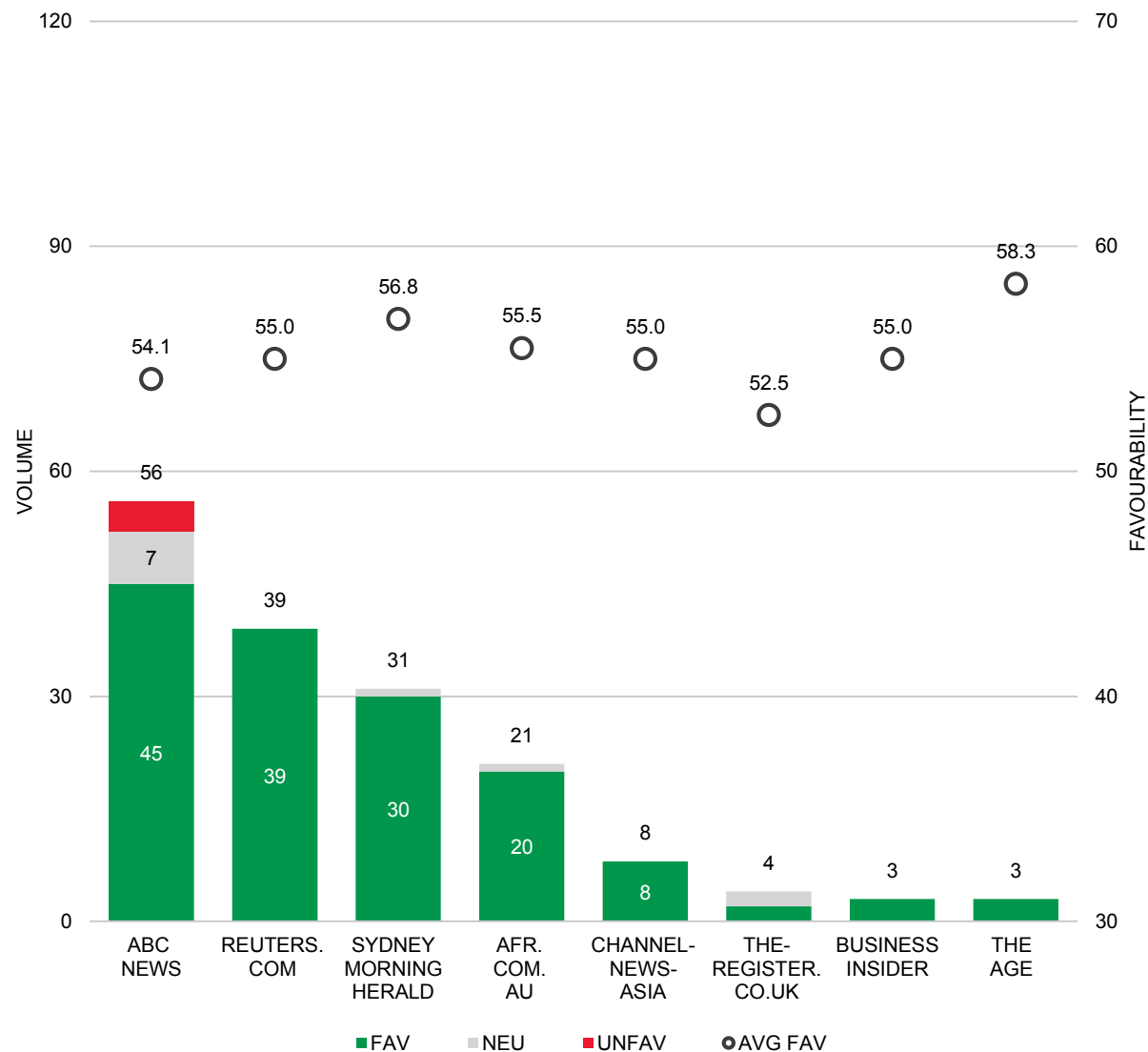
Chart 10 – Social Media



# LEADING SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

This chart shows the most frequently linked-to websites in social media posts; the volume of favourable, neutral and unfavourable links; and the average favourability of the posts with these links.

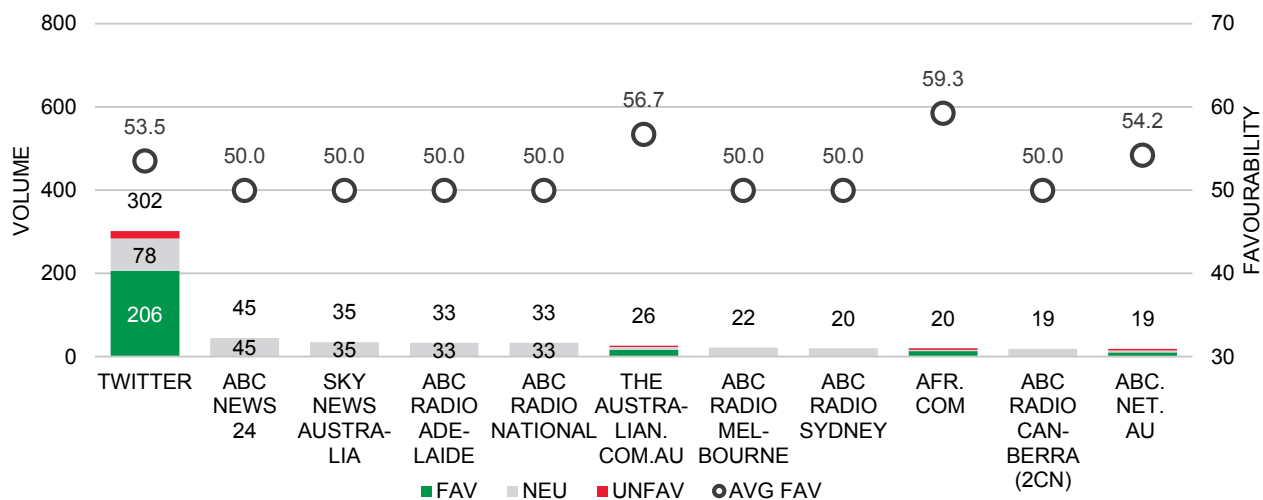
Chart 10 – Social Media



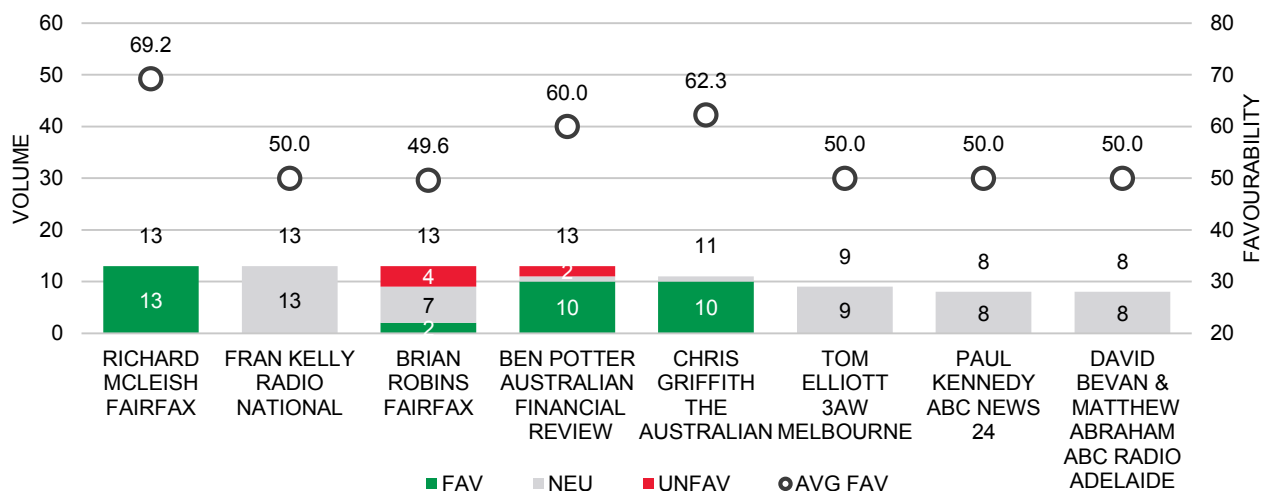
# LEADING MEDIA

These charts show the leading media, and the leading bylines and comperes within mainstream media.

## Chart 11 Leading Media – All Media

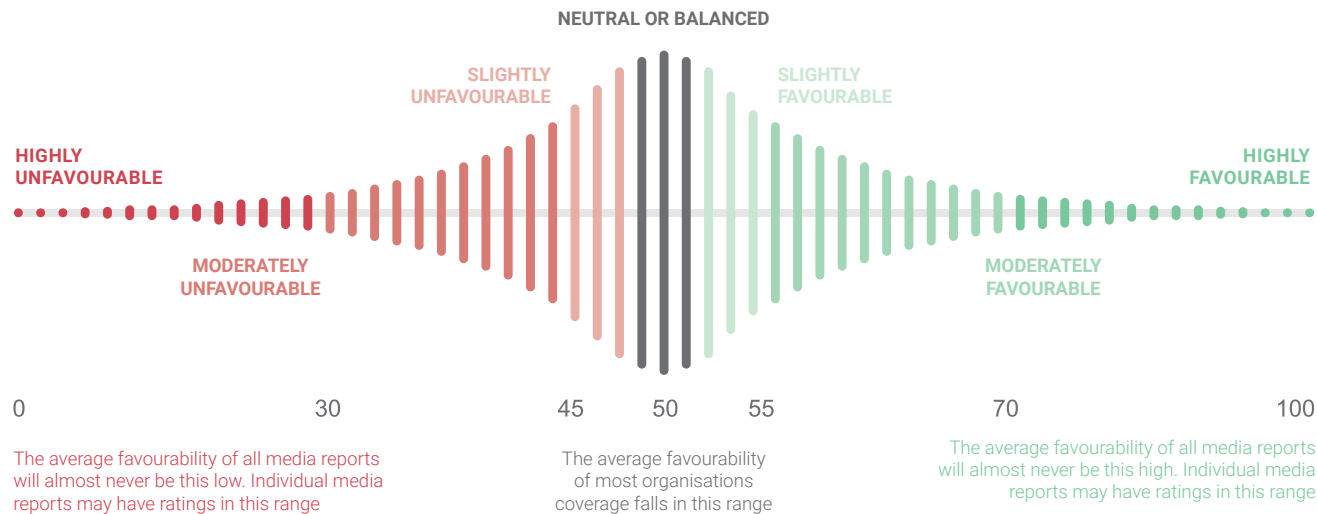


## Chart 12 Leading Bylines & Comperes – Press, Broadcast & Internet





# METHODOLOGY



Isentia uses the internationally recognised CARMA® media content analysis methodology. It combines technology and human intelligence to provide quantitative and qualitative insight and analysis. Our analysis takes into account multiple variables, including the:

- Placement of media reports (such as front page or lead item);
- Position of the organisation's mention in each report;
- Images or video;
- Topics discussed in the media and their relative importance to the client organisation;
- Messages, both favourable and unfavourable, communicated in media reports;
- Organisation representatives or other commentators quoted; and
- Tone of content.

An aggregate score is calculated based on these multiple variables and presented on a 0–100 scale where 50 is neutral. This is an overall rating of the favourability of each media report towards the client organisation (and, if relevant, other organisations or competitors).

This aggregate score is called the CARMA® favourability rating. The average favourability rating can identify the potential impact of media reporting and can be used to identify trends and establish benchmarks for future data.

The criteria for analysis (such as topics and specific key messages) are set up uniquely for each individual client by our expert analysts. Most of the variables analysed are objective criteria, while the more subjective topics and messages are identified by either exact phrasing or agreed-on alternatives, which are provided to researchers before analysis begins.

Isentia is a member of the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC), the leading organisation for media analysis and measurement and communications research globally, with more than 150 members in 80 countries and international membership chapters in North America, Asia Pacific and Europe. Having this membership means that Isentia complies with AMEC's strict standards, giving you confidence that you have received the best reports and insights (see [www.amecorg.com](http://www.amecorg.com)).

## Isentia - 2017 Communications Research & Measurement Company of the Year

### Additional 2017 Awards

- **Gold for Best Measurement of a Not-for-profit Campaign for White Ribbon Day**
- **Gold for Most Impactful Client Recommendations Arising from a Measurement Study for New Zealand Olympic Committee**
- **Gold for Most Impactful Client Recommendations Arising from a Measurement Study for White Ribbon Day**
- Silver for Best Measurement of a Consumer Campaign for SM Supermalls
- Silver for Best Use of Integrated Communication Measurement/Research for RUOK
- Bronze for Best Measurement of a Consumer Campaign for DBS
- Bronze for Best Measurement of a Not-for-profit Campaign for RUOK
- Bronze for Most Innovative Use of Measurement for a Digital Campaign for Harbour City Estates Limited